

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well

Campus News Archive

Campus News, Newsletters, and Events

2-24-2004

WCSA and Experiment Station attain national level of significance on National Register of Historic Places

University Relations

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news

Recommended Citation

University Relations, "WCSA and Experiment Station attain national level of significance on National Register of Historic Places" (2004). *Campus News Archive*. 1951.

https://digitalcommons.morris.umn.edu/urel_news/1951

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Campus News, Newsletters, and Events at University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. It has been accepted for inclusion in Campus News Archive by an authorized administrator of University of Minnesota Morris Digital Well. For more information, please contact skulann@morris.umn.edu.

Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

WCSA and Experiment Station attain national level of significance on National Register of Historic Places

Summary:

(February 24, 2004)-The West Central School of Agriculture and Experiment Station Historic District has been named to a national level of significance on the National Register of Historic Places. The district is located at the heart of the UMM campus.

One of the most intact examples of a residential agriculture high school still standing in the U.S., the WCSA was already entered on the National Register of Historic Places at a statewide level of significance in January 2003. The campus is also believed to be the earliest and most intact U.S. campus designed by prominent landscape architects Morell and Nichols. The historic district nomination brings with it a challenge to preserve, and, when possible, rehabilitate the historic landscapes and buildings within the district. Following the statewide designation on the National Register, UMM was awarded \$180,000 from the Getty Grant Program for the development of a preservation plan for the WCSA and Experiment Station Historic District.

"National recognition of the significance of the UMM/WCSA campus is important and appropriate because it affirms the role of rural education for farm boys and girls during the first half of the 20th Century," said UMM Chancellor Sam Schuman. "The core buildings surrounding our campus mall are a living museum of architecture, and the culture, of a boarding agricultural high school of that period. Even as UMM has become a national leader as a liberal arts college, we acknowledge with gratitude and respect the two institutions, which preceded us on this ground, the Indian Boarding School (1887-1909), and the WCSA (1910-1963)"

The Morris firm of Gemini Research, owned by Sue Granger and Scott Kelly, working under contract with UMM, provided compelling documentation to the State Historic Preservation Office on behalf of the WCSA. Research to support the document came from Dr. Richard H. Thomas of Cornell College who had previously conducted a study in an attempt to place the WCSA campus in a national context.

"There are about 1,500 sites and districts in Minnesota on the National Register," said Granger. "The vast majority are listed with a 'local' or 'statewide' level of significance. The WCSA and Experiment Station Historic District now joins approximately 80 of the 1,500 that are listed with a 'national' level of significance."

Granger added that "properties that are listed on the National Register with 'national' significance are thereby recognized as having significance to the history of the nation, rather than merely having significance to the state, or to a locality." National significance may gain more public recognition and support, said Granger. For example, a level of national significance opens an important grant-funding opportunity through the federal government's "Save America's Treasures" grant program and there may be others, according to Granger.

"In all grant applications for historic preservation funding, it will undoubtedly be a plus," said Granger.

In making their case for national designation, Gemini Research argued that:

- The phenomenon of high school-level agricultural boarding schools was a national trend. These schools were important to the history of high school education for farm children (many of whom were not attending high school), to the history of agricultural and vocational education in the U.S., and to the rise of "scientific" (as opposed to "traditional") agriculture, among other trends.
- The WCSA is an outstanding representative of the theme as one of the longest-running residential agricultural high schools in the country. Because it operated during nearly the entire period of the agricultural high school movement nationwide, the WCSA clearly embodies the movement's most important trends.

The WCSA is an outstanding representative of the theme as one of the most intact remaining examples of a residential agricultural high school campus in the U.S. today. (There is really only one other known comparable campus -- located in Nebraska -- which she hasn't seen, shared Granger.)

Britta L. Bloomberg, deputy state historic preservation officer, in a letter to Schuman, praised UMM for pursuing the research to support national significance and for engaging in planning to promote campus preservation.

--

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.